

BUILDING LEADERSHIP FROM THE GROUND UP

BY KATIE DANIEL



CLARENCE EMBERLEY | CERTIFICATE OF EXCELLENCE RECIPIENT

CERTIFICATE OF LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE

The Banff Centre Certificate of Leadership Excellence recognizes individuals who have made significant advances in leadership and personal growth by taking five programs through Leadership Development. More and more participants are taking successive Leadership Development programs because of the cumulative impact these programs deliver. The five programs can be taken in any order; we recommend taking the program that most meets your immediate leadership needs.

Clarence Emberley is one of the growing number recipients of the Certificate of Leadership Excellence. Emberley is Executive Advisor for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation in Yellowknife, NT. The corporation, in partnership with individuals, communities, business, Aboriginal organizations and other government and non-government organizations, works to provide suitable, affordable housing that supports a healthy, secure, independent, and dignified lifestyle.

“From the ground up” may be the newly-minted slogan for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, but it is also an apt metaphor for how Clarence Emberley has built his leadership skills.

Born and raised in a small community in Newfoundland, Emberley first worked as a teacher, then with an engineering firm. His first job was to rearrange the warehousing stock control system. Twelve years later, “I was project manager of the company. Worked hard, decided it was my goal to reach the top, and I did.”

That can-do attitude is typical. After a taste of municipal politics, Emberley became manager of facilities and systems for Eastern Provincial Airways. When the airline was bought out by Pacific Western, Emberley felt his chances were better out West and in 1985, moved to the Northwest Territories.

“YOU CAN’T GET THIS WHOLE PACKAGE ANYWHERE ELSE. IT’S PRICELESS.”

There he put together a maintenance management system for one of the five regions of the North, and by 1987 was given the opportunity to work at headquarters, developing a special computerized system for all the territories. In 2000, Emberley was awarded the National Housing Recognition Award by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation for his innovative computerized maintenance system.

With the growth of the NWT Housing Corporation, the President called on Emberley to work more closely with him in the executive office. Feeling the need to add to his toolbox of leadership skills Emberley did some research and talked to colleagues, several of whom had taken programs at Banff. Knowing that he'd need to communicate well both up and down the corporate ladder, he chose *Managing in the Middle* as his first program. As the only link to the President on a daily basis, Emberley says the program “struck him as just right. It helped me figure out my boss's strengths and weaknesses, and how he liked to do things. It helped me deal with conflict, confidence building, and trust. It helped me learn to prioritize work with my personal life and achieve a balance that I felt wasn't there.”

Emberley characterizes that first Leadership Development program as the foundation for his personal blueprint, his “footprint journey.” He takes this theme from the Inuit, “who built Inukshuks as guides for them to get home safely. They build them tall so they can be seen.” For Emberley, *Managing in the Middle* was the first guidepost on his own footprint journey. Another important part of that foundation was his learning partner. At The Banff Centre, each participant at Leadership Development is paired up with another course participant with whom they work throughout the week. The relationship is intended to deepen the network of feedback and support both during and after the program. Emberley felt such pride and support from his first partner, it helped him decide to take the journey further. “That letter really did it. That bond really sold me on coming back.”

Two of the challenges for any participant in a Leadership Development program are a willingness to be open to change, and to apply the models, techniques and lessons learned at Banff back in the workplace. For Emberley, consulting his journal, reading the twelve letters from his learning partners, reviewing readings from each program – often on a daily basis

– keep his mind open to slow and steady increments of change. He uses Executive-in-Residence Ted Chivers' “Top Ten Tested Truisms” as an example. “I look at them every morning. Live by them. Number one is ‘you can't win a marathon sprinting the entire way.’”

As for applying the principles, what he learned in *Managing in the Middle* was immediately implemented, with good results. It's a philosophy he's carried with him through all five programs as he crafted an employee recognition program, helped create the corporation's new slogan, and survived and thrived through sudden changes in the executive and government.

As he began to address other issues in his personal and professional life, Emberley found that more programs spoke to his needs. From *Building Foundations of Personal Leadership* he found ways to help control his stress, build effective relationships, and look at his more spiritual side. From *The Leadership Challenge* he found better ways to get feedback and challenge himself to work with tough people. His last program, *Leading Strategically*, was “the icing on the cake.” In the midst of a major vision change at the Housing Corporation, *Leading Strategically* “was perfect for that. Everything I do is by persuasion and that's one of the strong things I took back with me from this program – to get things done within deadlines using benchmarks for performance.”

He is now responsible for day-to-day operations at the most senior level: strategic planning, working with senior and middle management, advising, writing decision papers for the Territories' Minister responsible for the housing corporation, liaising with clients, working with the legislative assembly.

For Emberley, getting to this point in his career has been enriched by Leadership Development's unique mix. “There's something magic about Banff. I feel that is true for everyone who comes. Banff is the whole package: the follow-up, the partners, and the quality of the faculty. You feel good, you feel accomplishment, fulfillment. You have the scenery, you can walk up the mountains, listen to music. You can't get this whole package anywhere else. It's priceless!”